

# Idaho Economic Forecast

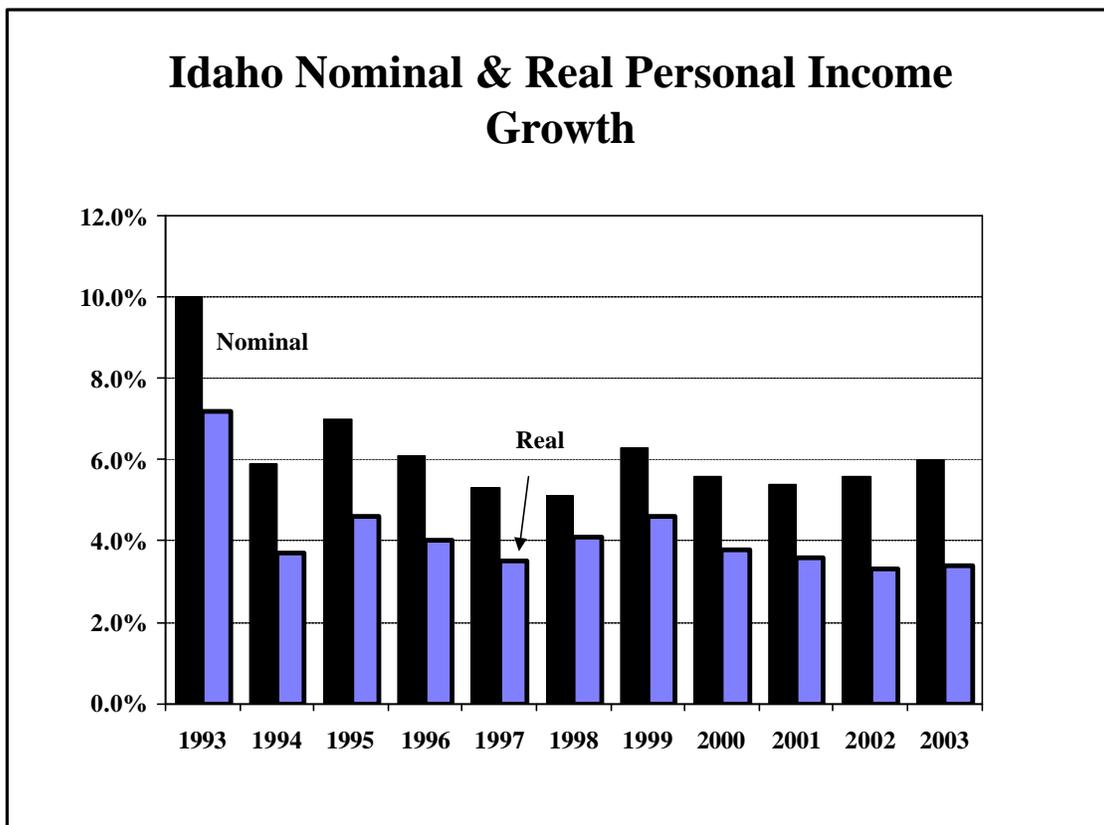
DIRK KEMPTHORNE, Governor

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- Forecast 1999-2003
- Projecting Budget Surpluses
- Alternative Forecasts



**Idaho  
Economic  
Forecast  
1999 - 2003**

State of Idaho  
DIRK KEMPTHORNE  
Governor

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## PREFACE

Idaho has entered its second century of statehood on solid economic ground. After nearly a decade of stop and start economic performance, the 1980s closed with a much-welcomed economic expansion. While not as sharp as the boom years of the 1970s, today's employment and income growth are exceptional in comparison to the 1980s. Much of the current expansion results from Idaho's successful adjustment (and sometimes painful restructuring) of its key basic industries.

Our traditional industries, such as lumber and wood products, food processing, and mining, have become more competitive. Our high-tech sector, which includes Hewlett-Packard, Zilog, and Micron Technology, has bucked recent national trends and undergone substantial expansion. In addition, the tourism and travel sectors have benefited from past investments in such projects as the Coeur d'Alene Resort, the convention centers in Boise and Nampa, and the Kellogg Gondola. Thus, the restructured Idaho economy is better positioned to exploit growth opportunities that will arise this decade, and is expected to sustain solid growth well through the 1990s.

A particularly satisfying aspect of the Gem State's passage into the 1990s is the broad base of economic health in Idaho today. Tourism, high-tech manufacturing, and the commercial sectors are thriving. After persevering through hard times, Idahoans are enjoying the benefits of the state's economic success on a wide geographical basis. Many of Idaho's rural communities that lagged urban growth rates during the 1980s have grown recently. Almost two-thirds of Idaho cities lost population during the previous decade. Many are now rebounding.

While many changes are taking place today, other traditional factors still hold firm. Most notably, Idaho's economy remains directly tied to its resource base. While displaying more resilience to downturns than in the past, these industries are not totally immune from business cycle effects. This heavy dependency on natural resources will bring a host of challenges as Idaho enters the next century. These include competition among agriculture, fisheries, and expanding population needs for water and energy; the environmental impacts of the economically important mining, timber, agricultural, and tourism industries; and the many other pressures of an expanding population on the state's natural and fiscal resources.

Other factors that are external to the state's economy will present challenges this decade to public and private decision makers. Public policy decisions made in Washington, D.C. affect resource industry and federal installations such as the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory near Idaho Falls and the Mountain Home Air Force Base. Finding balanced and acceptable solutions to endangered and threatened species issues and timber supply issues are of major economic significance.

In order to deal effectively with these challenges, public and private decisions need to be made with a thorough understanding of the structure of the state's economy. It is to this end that the *Idaho Economic Forecast* is directed.

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## INTRODUCTION

The national forecast presented in this publication is the November 1999 Standard and Poor's DRI baseline forecast of the U.S. economy. The October 1999 *Idaho Economic Forecast* is based on the September 1999 DRI national forecast.

The growth rates for both Idaho nominal and real personal income are shown on the cover of this report. This chart shows that nominal personal income growth should slow slightly in each of the next two years and then quicken in 2002. Real income growth displays a similar pattern. It slows through 2002 before accelerating in 2003.

## FEATURE

"Projecting Budget Surpluses" is the title of the article featured in this edition of the *Forecast*. The federal budget has ended with a surplus in the last two fiscal years, a feat last accomplished when Dwight Eisenhower was president. However, predicting whether there will be a surplus or deficit can be tricky. Projections of future deficits made in the 1980s were notoriously inaccurate. The last two years have seen enormous revisions in the projected surpluses, and future years are likely to see similarly large revisions. This article discusses the nature of the budget projections, sources of revisions, and the appropriate interpretation of the projections. It was written by Carl E. Walsh, Professor of Economics at the University of California, Santa Cruz and a visiting scholar at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

## THE FORECAST

Alternative assumptions concerning future movements of key economic variables can lead to major variations in national and/or regional outlooks. DRI examines the effects of different economic scenarios, including the potential impacts of international recessions, higher inflation, and future Federal Reserve Board decisions. Alternative Idaho economic forecasts were developed under different policy and growth scenarios at the national level. These forecasts are described in the text.

Historical and forecast data for Idaho and the U.S. are presented in the tables in the middle section of this report. Detail is provided for every year from 1984 to 2003 and for every quarter from 1997 through 2002. The solution of the Idaho Economic Model for this forecast begins with the third quarter of 1999.

Descriptions of the DRI U.S. Macroeconomic Model and the Idaho Economic Model are provided in the Appendix. Equations of the Idaho Economic Model and variable definitions are listed in the last pages of this publication.

## CHANGES

The employment numbers that appear in this publication are based on monthly data supplied by the Idaho Department of Labor. These data extend through the third quarter of 1999. The estimates for all of 1998 and the first six months of 1999 have been benchmarked. The monthly estimates for the third quarter of 1999 are preliminary. All the monthly data have been seasonally adjusted and converted into quarterly estimates by DFM.

The benchmarked data show that Idaho nonfarm employment grew 2.5% in 1998. The data also show that nonfarm employment advanced at a 2.8% annual rate during the first quarter of 1999 and a 3.9% rate in the second quarter. This was faster than the 0.7% pace for the second quarter of 1999 that was predicted in DFM's October 1999 forecast.

The tables in this forecast include the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis' (BEA) estimates of Idaho quarterly personal income through the second quarter of 1999. The BEA is scheduled to release its next round of Idaho personal income estimates in late January 2000. These estimates will run through the third quarter of 1999.

The *Idaho Economic Forecast* is available on the Internet at <http://www.state.id.us/dfm/econinfo.htm>. Readers with any questions should contact Derek Santos at (208) 334-3900 or at [dsantos@dfm.state.id.us](mailto:dsantos@dfm.state.id.us).

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

You can access the *Idaho Economic Forecast* for free at <http://www2.state.id.us/dfm/econinfo.htm>.

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